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Achanduin Castle, Lismore, Argyll: an account of the excavations by Dennis Turner, 1970–5

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7. ARTEFACTS

7.1 The ceramics

Derek Hall and George Haggarty

7.1.1 Introduction

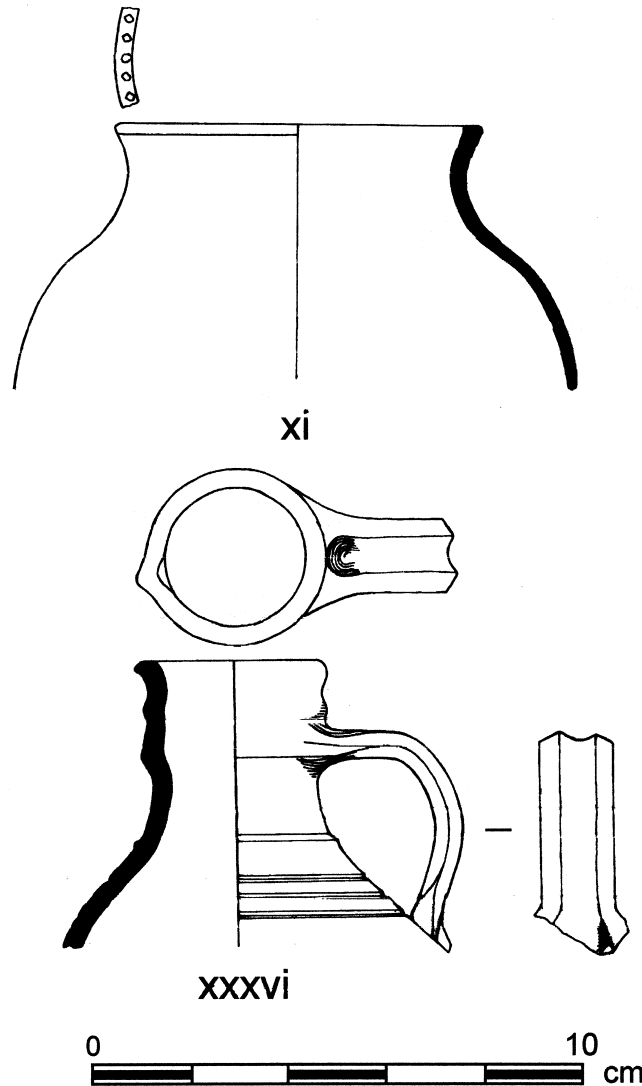
This assemblage, numbering some 142 sherds, was catalogued by the authors and assigned to recognised fabric identifications and date ranges. Identifications

were carried out by eye and x10 hand lens, and where possible published parallels are noted.

7.1.2 Hand-made wares

The hand-made ceramic tradition of the Scottish West Coast, Highlands and Islands is the subject of continuing debate and chronological uncertainty (Hall 2014). The Achanduin Castle assemblage contains 75 sherds from vessels in variations of these fabric types. Fabrics present are commonly micaceous and vary from those that have visible rock inclusions (sherd no. vii, for example) and are gritty (no. xl) through to a fabric that is heavily reduced (no. xxvi). Only one bodysherd shows any traces

of any organic elements in its fabric, in this case grass that has burnt out during the firing process (no. cdlxx). There are examples of decorated vessels (nos xl, xxvi), the decoration in both examples comprising stabbed holes on the vessel body and the top of the rim. Similar styles of decoration are now known from excavations at Baliscate on Mull (Hall 2017), Breacachadh Castle on Coll (Turner & Dunbar 1969–70), Iona Abbey (Hall & Haggarty 2013) and the islands of Gunna and Lewis (James 1998; Burgess, Church & Gilmour 1998). C14 dating at Baliscate, Mull suggests that this style is of a medieval date (possibly 14th/15th century). The contexts for nos xl and xxvi clearly suggest that they date to the 13th or 14th century.



Illus 31 Pottery. Hand-made vessel no. 1/xl; wheel-made jug no. 63/xxxvi

7.1.2 Wheel-made wares

This assemblage also includes 67 sherds from splash-glazed wheel-made vessels in a range of fabrics. Generally, these resemble fabrics that have been found on the mainland in the likes of Ayr and Dumbarton and would appear to be from jugs (Franklin & Hall 2012; Hall 2004). There is a rim and handle junction (no. 63/xxxvi) which is from a splash-glazed jug decorated with incised lines around the vessel body. It is in Scottish Post Medieval Oxidised Ware and must be of 16th-/17th-century date (Caldwell & Dean 1992; Haggarty, Hall & Chenery 2011). There is a single sherd of a Saintonge Type Bright Green glazed jug (no. cdliv) which is recorded as coming from a robber trench below the midden in Area IX-b. This is of late 13th-/early 14th-century date (Haggarty 2006).

7.1.3 Discussion and recommendations

The earliest sherd present is the single bodysherd of an imported Saintonge Green Glazed jug (no. cdliv) described above. There are also sherds of late medieval Scottish white ware vessels which should date to the 15th/16th century, but in the authors' opinion the remainder of the wheel-made wares appear to be of a much later medieval date, possibly from the 16th or 17th century. The biggest difficulty with an assemblage of this nature is identifying provenance, something that is still a considerable problem in this part of Scotland. Although there have now been upwards of 18 excavations on the Scottish West Coast and Islands that have recovered assemblages of hand-made wares in association with wheel-made wares, attempting to formulate a dating chronology is something that still needs to be tackled. As with the study of the medieval and later pottery industries on the Scottish mainland, the absence of excavated production centres is one of the biggest problems that needs to be addressed. Both the authors of this report feel that one step on the route to dealing with this would be to chemically source samples of the glazed wheel-made wares from sites on the West Coast and Islands that are found in association with hand-made wares as beginning to source the origin of the wheel-made wares will help to begin a form a chronology that can be tested

by further work. The opportunity should also be taken, where feasible, to C14 date any carbonised deposits that survive on the exterior surface of the hand-made wares.

7.2.1 Catalogue

7.2.1.1 *Hand-made*▶ **1 (xl) 32 sherds (8 joining), forming the rim and part of the body of a large cooking pot**

Gritty fabric decorated with stabbed dots

Forebuilding: 'layer of occupation soil within bridge pit', same context as coin no. 11 (Edward II penny)

Illus 31

▶ **2 (xxvi) 6 sherds, of which 5 join, from a small pot decorated below neck and shoulder with two stabbed bands**

Heavily reduced

Area V: 'black occupation layer above levelled tumble in west corner of south-east range'

▶ **3 (cdlviii) Mould fragment**

Area V: 'black soil above irregular stone in west corner of undercroft of south-east range; midden period?'

▶ **4 (vii) Sherd**

Local hand-made, highly micaceous buff clay, sparse rock inclusions

▶ **5 (xvi) 2 sherds**

Similar fabric to no. 4/vii

▶ **6 (ix) 2 sherds**

Highly micaceous sherds similar to no. 5/xvi

Area I-SW

▶ **7 (xiii) 2 conjoining sherds**

Thick heavy body sherds from a hand-made vessel with handle scar, highly micaceous

Area II-SW: 'midden layer below tumble near wall of south-east range'

▶ **8 (cdlxxii) 2 sherds**

Local reduced fabric with large grits, slash decoration (?)

Area V-a: 'black soil below lower tumble in west corner of undercroft of south-east range'

► **9 (xxvii) 4 sherds from same vessel**

Slightly micaceous

Area V

► **10 (xxxiv) Sherd**

Highly micaceous fabric – transitional?

Area II-a

► **11 (cdliii) 3 sherds**

Micaceous fabric, buff reduced core, slightly gritty

Area IX-b

► **12 (cdlx) Sherd**

Micaceous fabric

Area IX-b

► **13 (xliii) Sherd**

Reduced gritty fabric

Area IX-b

► **14 (iv) Sherd**

Slightly oxidised surface, reduced interior

Area I

► **15 (iv) 3 sherds, probably from two different vessels**

Highly micaceous fabric

Area I

► **16 (vii) Sherd**

Highly micaceous fabric

Area II

► **17 (cdlxx) Sherd**

Off-white fabric with buff oxidised exterior, traces of grass impressions (burnt out)

Area III-N

► **18 (vii) 2 sherds**

Highly micaceous

Area II

► **19 (v) 2 conjoined sherds from basal angle**

Highly micaceous fabric, orange on inside, reduced on exterior

Area I

► **20 (cdlv) Sherd**

Highly micaceous

► **21 (xliv) 6 sherds**

East entrance

► **22 (vi) 2 sherds**

Highly micaceous, reduced fabric

Area IX: 'from above bedrock'

► **23 (iii) 2 conjoining sherds from neck and shoulder of a vessel**

Smooth sandy fabric oxidised exterior, reduced interior

Area IX

► **24 (cdliii) Sherd**

Highly micaceous, buff exterior, reduced interior

Area IX-b

► **25 Basal angle sherd**

Grass tempered ware

7.1.1.2 Wheel-made, medieval and post-medieval

► **26 (cdliv) Sherd, probably from a jug**

Smooth white fabric, traces of exterior green glaze. Saintonge bright green glaze

Area IX-b: 'from robber trench below midden'

► **27 (xx) 2 conjoining sherds from the rim and strap handle of a large jug**

White ware, degraded green glaze on exterior and traces of white substance inside

Area IV-NW: 'occupation layer within undercroft of south-east range'

► **28 (xii) 2 sherds**

Late medieval white ware, heavily green glazed, reduced core

Area II

► **29 (xvii) Sherd**

Similar fabric to no. 28/xii

Area II-SE

► **30 (xxi) 6 conjoining sherds from the basal angle and lower area of a thick late medieval jug**

White ware with oxidised surfaces and reduced core

Area IV-NW: 'occupation layer at floor level within undercroft of south-east range'

► **31 (xxiv) 2 sherds**

A late medieval white ware, basal angle sherd, reduced core, part of same vessel as no. 30/xxi; and a sherd in a hard red buff fabric with reduced core, highly micaceous

Area IV: 'occupation layer below clay within undercroft of south-east range'

► **32 (xxii) 3 sherds**

Similar fabric to no. 30/xxi – white ware with a reduced core

Area IV-SE: 'occupation layer at floor level within undercroft of south-east range'

► **33 (xxiii) 1 small rim sherd and 1 body sherd from jugs**

The body sherd is in a similar fabric to no. 30/xxi and no. 32/xxii

Area IV: 'occupation layer below clay within undercroft of south-east range'

► **34 (xxix) Sherd**

Hard late medieval white ware with heavily reduced core, similar to no. 30/xxi and no. 32/xxii

Area IV-SE: 'floor level within undercroft of south-east range'

► **35 (xxxii) Sherd**

Thick, highly fired, white ware sherd, lead glazed on exterior

Area VIII-SW: 'cobble level south-west of secondary walling at east corner of undercroft of south-east range, close to possible post-hole'

► **36 (xii) 2 conjoining rim sherds from a jug with a pulled spout**

Late medieval white ware with reduced core

Area II

► **37 (xxxiii) Sherd, possibly from a jug**

Late medieval white ware with heavily reduced core and lead glazed exterior

Area IV-a: 'occupation layer (but apparently below uppermost remains of cobbling) within undercroft of south-east range'

► **38 (cdlxi) 3 joining sherds**

Late medieval white ware, slightly reduced interior, heavily green glazed

Area VI: 'below tumble'

► **39 2 sherds**

(viii) Small, late medieval glazed sherd from the neck of a jug (?), with cordon

(x) Sherd of late medieval buff fabric, from small jug with handle scar, splashed green glaze

Area IV: 'robbing of inner (south-west) jamb of doorway to undercroft of south-east range'

► **40 (xix) Sherd**

Similar fabric to no. 39/x

Area I

► **41 (xiv) Sherd**

Similar fabric to no. 39/x, splashed lead glaze

Area II

► **42 (cdlxxv) Sherd**

Late medieval white ware, reduced core, thick green glaze

Area IV-74b: 'occupation layer within undercroft of south-east range'

► **43 (ii) Sherd**

Late medieval white ware, reduced core, green glaze

Area I: 'topsoil on north side of enclosure'

► **44 (xxxvii) 2 sherds**

A post-medieval white ware sherd and another in a sandy fabric

Area I-SW: 'top of stony fill below cobble'

► **45 (ii) Sherd**

Post-medieval white fabric, reduced core, thick green glaze, impressed thumb marks

Area I: 'topsoil on north side of enclosure'

► **46 (xxviii) Body sherd and strap handle**

Smooth, sandy, micaceous fabric; splashed green glaze on exterior

Area I-NE: 'occupation layer just above cobble in north quadrant of castle enclosure'

► **47 (xxxix) Sherd, possibly from a vessel formed in a mould**

Buff sandy ware

Area III-NW

- ▶ **48 (xlix) Fragment of a spindle whorl made from reused sherd of wheel made pottery**
Buff sandy fabric
Area IX-b: 'upper tumble'
 - ▶ **49 (cdlxxiv) Sherd**
Buff fabric, micaceous, reduced interior
Area V-a
 - ▶ **50 (cdli) Sherd. From jug**
Late medieval slightly gritty pinkish fabric under thick lead glaze
 - ▶ **51 (cdlxxiii) Sherd**
Smooth red ware, white inclusions, degraded glaze on exterior
 - ▶ **52 (cdlvii) Sherd**
Glazed red ware. English?
Area IX-b
 - ▶ **53 (xiv) Sherd**
Glazed red ware. English?
Area IX-b
 - ▶ **54 (xxx) 2 conjoining base sherds**
Red fabric, heavily reduced
 - ▶ **55 (xxxi) Sherd**
Red ware, heavily reduced, green glaze on exterior
 - ▶ **56 (cdlv) Sherd**
Late medieval red ware (?)
 - ▶ **57 (xi) Sherd**
Reduced grey ware slightly gritty fabric, heavily green glazed, from jug shoulder with cordon
Area II-d
 - ▶ **58 (xxxviii) Sherd**
A small flake, heavily green glazed, in a slightly micaceous reduced fabric
Area I-NE
 - ▶ **59 (xliii) 2 sherds**
A late medieval sherd with traces of lead glaze on interior – reshaped? Another small sherd of reduced ware in a highly micaceous gritty fabric
 - ▶ **60 (ix) Sherd**
A green glazed sherd in a reduced fabric (from a small jug?)
Area I-SW
 - ▶ **61 (xxxv) 5 conjoining sherds from the base of a late, crudely made vessel**
Green glaze on interior, traces of external burning
Area VII
 - ▶ **62 (cdlvii) Sherd**
Reduced core, nice paste
Area IX-b
 - ▶ **63 (xxxvi) 5 sherds all joining to form the upper profile and strap handle of a Scottish post-medieval oxidised ware vessel decorated with shoulder cordon above three incised horizontal bands**
Area III: 'below wall of secondary building'
Illus 31
 - ▶ **64 Sherd**
1 bodysherd from Scottish post-medieval oxidised ware vessel
Area IX-a/e
- 7.1.1.3 Factory-produced wares of the 19th century*
- ▶ **65 3 sherds**
Blue and white transfer printed paste, standard willow pattern. Bells of Glasgow
 - ▶ **66 2 sherds, vessel lip**
Pearlware, trailed decoration in blue and yellow